

# THE CLASSIFIEDS

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For the Osgood Journal, by Friday at 11:00 a.m.

For The Versailles Republican, by Tuesday at 11:00 a.m.

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The Milan Community School Corporation, 412 East Carr Street, Milan, Indiana 47031, will be accepting sealed bids for the sale of 2 school buses. The first is a 2012 Thomas Freightliner, 72 passenger school bus, mileage of 91,955. The second is a 2012 Thomas Freightliner 72 passenger school bus, mileage of 80,841. Buses will be sold as is.

Bids should be stated for individual buses. Bids will be accepted at the office of the Superintendent until 12:00 pm on Friday, May 31, 2024. Bids may be delivered in person or mailed to the above address.

**For further information, bidders may contact Mike Brandes, Director of Operations, at 812-654-2365 ext 311.**

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**Send your story to publication@ripleynews.com.**

**Have Questions? Call (812) 689-6364**

# The Robo Reckoner: AG Todd Rokita continues relentless takedown of illegal scam callers

Attorney General Todd Rokita and his team continue to rack up tens of millions of dollars in penalties from illegal robocallers, amassing court wins and settlements that stretch far beyond Indiana state lines.

Just last week, Rokita's office led 49 bipartisan attorneys general from the Anti-Robocall Multistate Litigation Task Force against Avid Telecom, a company which sent 24 billion problematic calls during a 4-year period. Avid Telecom even continued transmitting robocalls despite hundreds of warnings that illegal phone calls were being transmitted across their networks – a blatant disregard for telecom privacy that is common throughout the illegal industry.

After successful arguments from Rokita's office, the Arizona District Court ruled against Avid Telecom's motion to dismiss, setting up Indiana's Data Privacy & ID Theft team to hold the company, owner Michael D. Lansky, and vice president Stacey S. Reeves, accountable in the courtroom.

But beating robocallers in court – or sometimes even locating them – is the result of innovation and dedication within the Indiana Attorney General's office.

In the years leading up to Rokita's tenure as attorney general, Consumer Reports and trade magazines described the billions of robocalls hitting Indiana as "an epidemic... no phone is safe."

Rokita's anti-robocaller attorneys pursued defendants who were responsible for hitting Hoosiers with more than 25 million scam calls in less than one year, taking advantage of everything from auto insurance claims to DirectTV payments. Defendants, like John Caldwell Spiller II, the owner of Texas-based Rising Eagle Capital Group LLC and JSquared Telecom LLC, spoofed phone numbers and bypassed both federal and Indiana "Do Not Call" lists to target their victims.

Rokita and his office's Data Privacy and Identity Theft team declared war on robocallers in 2021, filing a first-of-its-kind lawsuit against Startel Communication LLC, a now-banned gateway operation that allowed robocallers from India, the Philippines and Singapore to freely harass Hoosier phone lines. That same year, Rokita dismantled the massive Associated Community Services (ACS) telefunding operation, which swindled \$110 million from 67 million consumers nationwide who thought they were donating to charities.

Today, robocall tracking sites like Robokiller have removed Indiana entirely from their "top scammer target states," revealing a reduction of tens of millions of scam calls since 2020.

"Everyone knows robocallers are a huge nuisance, but they pose dangers much worse than merely disturbing our peace," Attorney General Rokita said. "Quite often, these robocalls are part of criminal schemes aimed at stealing Hoosiers' identity and taking our hard-earned money. These annoying and illegal calls are the work of professional scammers looking to prey on unsuspecting victims. That's why we have fought robocallers so doggedly since my first day in office, issuing around \$392 million in fines and settlements from robocalling operations."

In August of 2022, Attorney General Rokita announced that his team was co-leading (with North Carolina, and Ohio) the Anti-Robocall Litigation Task Force, a 51-member collective focused on actively investigating and pursuing enforcement actions against various entities in the robocall ecosystem. Attorney General Rokita has earned national praise from telecom outlets over the years for the innovative ways in which his team has investigated and prosecuted wrongdoers – and their ability to work in lockstep with attorneys general offices across the country.

Some of these robocallers are amorphous and slippery figures that claim to have all the answers for unsuspecting U.S. victims of all ages, regarding Medicare rewards, Social Security Administration information, auto war-

ranty "updates," or even posing as Amazon delivery personnel.

Many robocalling operations move frequently from state-to-state or even nation-to-nation, dissolving and then reappearing under new names. That makes pursuing individual robocallers a daunting, uphill task.

In response to their changing tactics, Rokita's anti-robocall attorneys led the innovative approach of going after the telecom gatekeepers: Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) providers. The move allowed Indiana to curb millions of calls and block out foreign scammers who abuse the American phone system. In another novel approach, Rokita's anti-robocall attorneys also targeted another key ally of robocallers – people like Michael T. Smith and Scott Shapiro – operators of the physical call centers that profit from these robocalls.

## WIN RUNDOWN BULLET POINTS:

State of Indiana, et al. v. John Spiller II, et al. John Spiller: \$122,339,320, suspended to \$50,000. Injunctive terms to curb robocalling and telemarketing.

Jakob Mears: \$122,339,320, suspended to \$10,000. Injunctive terms to curb robocalling and telemarketing.

Scott Shapiro: \$ 73,076,930, suspended to \$250,000. Injunctive terms to curb robocalling and telemarketing.

Michael T. Smith and Health Advisors of America: \$ 73,076,930, suspended to \$250,000. Injunctive terms to curb robocalling and telemarketing.

State of Indiana v. Startel Communication LLC, et al. Startel and Wanda Hall: \$1,338,100, suspended to \$5,000, and total ban from industry.

Piratel: \$150,000, suspended to \$50,000 and injunctive terms.

VoIP Essential: \$150,000, suspended to \$25,000 and injunctive terms.

State of Indiana v. Eric Simkin, et al.: \$2,500 settlement and injunctive terms.

State of Indiana v. Greg Sheppard, et al.: \$30,000 settlement and injunctive terms

Other actions:

State of Indiana, v. One Eye LLC: Successful Civil Investigative Demand enforcement, with penalties.

State of Indiana v. MV Realty LLC, et al.: Lawsuit

This past January, Rokita's office successfully led 45 attorneys general in a comment to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), ensuring that a new FCC rule would not impact the states' litigation into VoIP providers. Litigation against those that help and assist robocallers is important, as Rokita's office has shown. Rokita's office was able to secure an industry-wide ban against Startel Communication, and other injunctive terms against providers like VoIP Essential and Piratel, and callers like Eric Simkin and Greg Sheppard.

Through bans and injunctive action, Rokita's team has protected Hoosiers while winning millions in suspended settlements that ensure compliance and justice moving forward.

"Winning the war on robocallers requires constantly staying on offense and tracking the latest technologies the scammers are using to carry out their schemes," Attorney General Rokita said in March 2023, following a string of large settlements and trial victories against multistate robocall operations. "We have pledged to do that since we first took office, and we continue to make good on that promise."

"If you aid and abet lawbreakers in their commission of criminal acts, then you had best expect to be held accountable for your own role in those misdeeds," Attorney General Rokita said this week, four years into his anti-scam caller crusade. "We have sent that message loud and clear to the culprits paving the way for illegal robocallers, and we're going to keep going after them tooth and nail."

## LOCALS.....CON'T FROM PAGE 7

This year, the winner of the A.T. Siler Memorial Service Award is Madison "Madi" Fields, a junior from Barbourville, Kentucky. The 2024 T.E. Mahan Memorial Service Award recipient is Chaz Disney, a junior from Corbin, Kentucky. Jordan Richardson, a graduating senior from Williamsburg, Kentucky, won the 2024 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award. The 2024 winner of the Mary Mildred Sullivan Award is Kristin Mitchell, a graduating senior from Corbin, Kentucky. The Gorman Jones Campus Leadership Award was given to Haleigh Hopper, a graduating senior from Barbourville, Kentucky. Graduating senior Josh Carey was awarded the 2024 T.J. Roberts Campus Leadership Award.

Campus award winners, Hutton Scholars, Latin honors students, Presidential Scholars, and J.T. Vallandigham Scholars were recognized during undergraduate commencement ceremonies. Additionally, during the ceremonies, Dr. Cockrum told graduates, "We are living in uncertain times, with many challenges facing our communities and the world at large. But we must not let these challenges deter us. We must continue to persevere, to push through obstacles, and to make a positive impact in the world. So, dream big, work hard, make some mistakes, and always be kind. These are the values that have guided me throughout my life, and I believe they can help you, too, as you embark on your own journey. Once again, congratulations to the graduates of University of the Cumberland."

College is quite a time. From deciding on majors, to making new friendships, to beginning romantic relationships, to competing in fine arts or sports, to navigating changing family dynamics, to adjusting to living away from home, life is full for college students. So, for all who have read this far into the article, here are a few real-life, non-GPA stats about the college experience:

On average, assuming only fall and spring semesters, college students spent 43,200 on homework/studying during their four-year college career.

Assuming college students consumed an average amount of hours on Netflix, they spent 2,417 hours watching their favorite shows and movies over the past four years.

Assuming the graduates made Keurig coffee in their dorms half the time and bought fancier coffee beverages the other half (and assuming only one coffee was drunk per day a potentially low estimate), they spent a little more than \$2,900 on coffee over the course of four years.

Graduates walked across the viaduct on campus a minimum of twice a day to get to and from academic buildings, meaning they had a minimum of 1,152 trips across the viaduct.

Cumberlands' Williamsburg campus is located near a Walmart that is regularly frequented by college students. If they visited Walmart once a week during the fall and spring semesters, graduates visited Walmart 144 times throughout their college careers.

And finally, assuming the graduates ate a Chick-fil-A sandwich four times a week for every week they lived on campus, they ate a total of 576 chicken sandwiches. And hopefully enjoyed plenty of waffle fries with them.

University of the Cumberland is one of the largest and most affordable private universities in Kentucky. Located in Williamsburg, Kentucky, Cumberland is an institution of regional distinction offering quality undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and online degree programs. Learn more at ucumberland.edu.



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